

Tenant Participation - Capacity for Change Initiative

Introduction

1. The last meeting of the Working Group considered a paper (WGHA1-7) which set out the implications for landlords of the provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 relating to tenant participation. It sought views on the options for the allocation and distribution of the resources that have been made available to help landlords implement these provisions.
2. The discussion focussed on the need for an initial preliminary tenant participation audit for landlords to help clarify priorities for making best use of these resources. A range of views were expressed and it was agreed that a follow up meeting would be arranged with representative landlord and tenant bodies.

Follow up Meeting

3. This meeting took place on 13 August and agreed the following points:
 - The key objective was to encourage landlords to develop good quality tenant participation strategies and consultation arrangements in line with the provisions of the Act;
 - The guidance on tenant participation strategies and related matters would be crucial and it was agreed that the tenant bodies would liaise to agree a suggested draft framework for this guidance for discussion at the first meeting of the tenant participation sub-group (now scheduled for 9 October);
 - It was impractical to insist on all landlords commissioning an independent tenant participation audit before getting access to the funding that had been made available;
 - A better approach would be to ensure that landlords could use the available resources to commission a tenant participation audit if they felt that this was a priority for them.
 - There was also some discussion about the value of top slicing the resources available to fund the appointment of Development Officers (sometimes known as Capacity Building Officers) who would have responsibility for facilitating and promoting good practice throughout Scotland. It was agreed that the Executive would consider in more detail what role might be played by a team of centrally funded Development Officers.

Way Forward

4. The key issue for the Working Group is to decide whether all the available resources should simply be allocated to landlords on the basis of an agreed formula or, alternatively, if some of the resources should be top sliced for centrally funded initiatives. A second issue is to decide on the formula for allocating the resources to landlords.

5. Since the last meeting of the Group, there have been further discussions within the Scottish Executive on the basis on which all the funding for Housing Act Implementation would be administered. It has been agreed:

- it will be allocated as a specific grant and paid by Communities Scotland;
- payment of grant will be linked to agreement of specific objectives;
- grant recipients will be required to report regularly on the activities funded through grant moneys and the achievement of the specified objectives.

6. If we are now agreed that resources for tenant participation audits should not be top sliced from the budget, then the only remaining proposal is for a possible team of Development Officers. The Executive would welcome the views of the Working Group on whether such a team would be desirable, in principle, or alternatively if it would be better to simply allow landlords to use the resources to purchase consultancy advice if and when this is required. To help in this discussion, we have a tentative specification for the work of such a team of Development Officers. This is attached at Annex A

7. If it is agreed that it is desirable, in principle, to top slice the budget to fund a team of Development Officers then we would need to agree the practical aspects (how many and how would they be recruited, who would employ them, where would they be based etc). It would be appropriate to remit these matters to the tenant participation sub-group but the Executive's view is there could be some significant practical difficulties which would need to be resolved.

8. We have assumed that the formula for allocating resources to landlords (whether or not there has been any top slicing) should be based on a fixed sum per landlord plus £x per tenancy. It would be helpful to have views on the balance between these 2 elements and, in particular, the likely size of the fixed costs which all landlords will have. The Executive can then model some alternative figures.

Conclusion

9. It would be helpful if members of the Group could:

- confirm that they are content with the conclusion on tenant participation audits;
- offer a view on the desirability, in principle, of top slicing the budget to fund a central team of Development Officers;
- offer views on the relative balance between a fixed allocation per landlord and £x per tenancy in the formula for allocating resources to landlords.

**HOUSING ACT IMPLEMENTATION
PROPOSAL FOR TENANT PARTICIPATION DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS**

The first question is what is it we are trying to achieve through the development officer role? What will constitute successful outcomes for the Scottish Executive?

Outcome

- Landlords to be aware of their obligations under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 in respect of tenant participation.
- Landlords to be in constructive dialogue with tenants about the content of the landlords tenant participation strategy.
- Landlords to have successfully reviewed their current practice and identified future action that they will take.
- Landlords to have a good understanding of the ways in which good tenant participation can happen and the tools available to support this in practice.

Therefore this leads to a job description and person specification which captures the following:

- 1) To promote the new obligations on landlords in respect of tenant participation provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- 2) To organise and contribute to national and local events on tenant participation.
- 3) To prepare information material for landlords about new statutory arrangements for tenant participation.
- 4) To develop and deliver customised training for landlords on tenant participation matters.
- 5) To offer ad hoc advice to landlords on how they might review current practice, including the development of a checklist to assist self-assessment.
- 6) To promote local networks and partnerships between landlords to share good practice in tenant participation.

Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Skills		
– Written communication	X	
– Oral communication	X	
– Presentation skills	X	
– Managing conflict	X	
– Influencing	X	
– Self-starter	X	
Knowledge		
– Tenant/community involvement	X	
– Local authority/housing associations – decision making	X	
– Housing legislation		X
– Awareness of equality issues in accessing services.	X	
Experience		
– Tenant participation/community involvement	X	
– Policy development		X
– Training and development		X
Qualifications		
– Willing to travel/work evenings/weekends	X	
– Community involvement qualification		X
– Housing qualification		X
– Car driver		X